

An enthusiastic and self-motivated Urban & Environmental Planner-Scientist with 10 years of experience in participatory planning, community development, and promoting urban and community green spaces. Experienced Science Research (Ph.D.) in socio-ecological dynamics bringing forth valuable industry experience and passion for human-environmental interactions.

Areas of Interest

Urban Environmental Justice /
Ecological Agriculture / Sustainable
Urbanism / Green Infrastructure
Environmental Policy / Urban Commons
Civic Ecology & Citizen Participation

Skills

Project coordination / Research group
leader / Event Manager / Community
liaison / Qualitative & Quantitative
research techniques and methodologies

MS Office / Publisher / GIS / Gantt
Project / SPSS / Dedoose

Creative, organized, energetic, and
responsible. Able to adapt to changing
priorities and maintain a positive
attitude and strong work ethic.

Outgoing and detail-oriented. I am
proficient at building and maintaining
professional relationships.

Spanish (native) advanced
English intermediate

Certifications / License

Licensed Professional Planner (PPL)
Examining Board of Professional
Planner, Department of State,
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.
Since 2013

Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG).
National Association for Interpretation
(NAI) 2011-2019

Community Emergency Response Team
(CERT) FEMA

Watershed Management Training
Certificate. Watershed Academy Web,
US Environmental Protection
Agency (EPA) 2013

Professional Preparation

Ph.D. Environmental Sciences 2021

Natural-Human Systems in the Urbanizing Tropics. NSF-IGERT Fellowship Program.
University of Puerto Rico - Río Piedras

Dissertation project: Civic ecology in the urban environment of San Juan, PR:
Community gardens and their socio-environmental impact.
Advisor: Dr. Gustavo García-López.

M.P. Natural Resources and Environmental Planning & Urban and Regional Planning 2012

Graduate School of Planning, University of Puerto Rico- Río Piedras.

Planning Project: "Conexión ribereña entre la Reserva del río Espíritu Santo y
el Bosque El Yunque: Propuesta para el desarrollo de un corredor verde
aplicando un mecanismo colaborativo de conservación".

Advisors: Dr. Carmen M. Concepción & Plan. Félix Aponte Ortiz

B.Sc. Wildlife Management 2008

University of Puerto Rico- Humacao.

Final work: Management plan for a secondary forest in the University of Puerto
Rico campus at Humacao. (Group Work).

Selected Experiences

Regional Community Planning Associate at Foundation for Puerto Rico -
Whole Community Resilience Planning Program (WCRP).

July 2021 - December 2021

- Supported development of Planning Framework of WCRP program.
- Supported development of WCRP's Education Strategy resources to guide and provide tools to communities and organizations for implementing WCRP's Planning Framework.

Ph.D. Researcher. Investigated and analyzed citizen collective actions in restoring urban vacant land and its socio-environmental impact. Dept. Environmental Sciences, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras.
2016 – 2021

Selected Experiences (cont.)

Environmental Outreach Facilitator

USDA-NIFA Natural Resources Careers Track Program Puerto Rico

January 2019 – July 2020

- Developed and facilitated Environmental Education Curriculum for Elementary Schools, & Planned and Implemented Ecological Agriculture Activities for a School Garden
- Coordinated with Rio Piedras Urban Action Center (CAUCE) and the communities around the UPR-RP social-environmental outreach activities to enhance the urban community environment and the residents' quality of life
- Planned and Implemented School Garden Curriculum Activities for UPR-RP Preschool Development Center.
- Mentored undergraduate students in the field of environmental career and the development of outreach activities.

Community Facilitator & Project Assistant Community Garden and Urban Forest of Capetillo. Rio Piedras Urban Action Center (CAUCE)

September 2017 – July 2018

Interim Project Coordinator (September 2017 to March 2018) Coordinated with the community members' efforts to recover after Hurricane Irma and Maria. Developed strategies & activities to improve the physical and social conditions in the garden and the Capetillo community:

- Coordinated the daily maintenance, planting, and harvest in the garden through an educational process and community inclusion
- Facilitated community meetings and participation & established a new governance structure in the community garden
- Coordinated Educational Summer Camp and Tutoring Program
- Performed general administrative duties, record keeping, and reports

GIS Teacher assistant. Department of Environmental Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. August 2015 – July 2017

Assisted in the Geographic Information System (GIS) courses (undergraduate & graduate) and organized and collaborated in the GIS lab.

- Developed Practical and Theoretical Exercises
- Lead some Lectures & Recordkeeping
- Supported Students in their Laboratory Practices

Forestry Technician – Research at USDA-Forest Service Vinton Furnace State Experimental Forest & Northern Research Station, Ohio, USA.

June to August 2014

- Research assistant in Oak Restoration Project. Assisted in setting up and operating standard equipment used for performing laboratory tests to make scientific measurements and observations of sample materials gathered from experimental field plots

AmeriCorps State at Corporación del Proyecto ENLACE del Caño Martín Peña.

October 2012 - August 2013

- Field Facilitator - Support ENLACE's initiatives in the community to improve the environment and quality of life of the residents of Martín Peña Channel District: Property & flood inventory, environmental outreach, and urban-environmental clean-up activities, among other activities
- Collaborated in the participation process of the first stage of Community Hazard Mitigation Plan, & Researched Strategies for Community Adaptation to the Climate Changes
- Project assistant: "Renovando mi Entorno" (REMEN). The Project Aim was Transforming the Community Through Empowerment of Residents and Their Sense of Belonging. Serve as a liaison between ENLACE and the community, lead community meetings & clean-up, and paint house façade

Intern of Science, Education and Public Policy Division at Para La Naturaleza & **Programa de Apoderamiento y Retención de Agentes de Cambio** (PARACa) Mentas Puertorriqueñas en Acción.

June to August 2012

- Performed database structure and data entry of ecological information of Mapa de Vida Project
- Database programming in the Geographic Information System (GIS) and developed maps of species distribution to educate and facilitate the management of the natural areas
- Research and drafted - Community Tourism in Puerto Rico: Proposal for effective implementation in Puerto Rican communities

Project and Research Assistant at Community Garden, Nursery, and Urban Forest of Capetillo. Río Piedras Urban Action Center (CAUCE), University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras

October 2010 - June 2012

Developed Activities and Educational Workshops to Improve the Environmental Condition and Self-development of People of Capetillo Community.

- Provided Technical, Administrative & Scientific Support
- General Administrative Duties, Marketing Promotion & developed a network of collaborators
- Social media content creator
- Tutoring Program Coordinator

Planning Intern. Instituto Socio Económico Comunitario, Inc. (INSEC)

Fall 2010

- Assisted in the development of the organization's strategic plan. Developed socio-demographic profile of Puerto Rican communities.

Research Assistant. Laboratory of Terrestrial Ecology and Ecophysiology analysis of spatial patterns.

University of Puerto Rico – Humacao

January 2006 – June 2008

- Research studies of mangrove tree Aguirre Forest, Mona Island Reserve, and Guánica Dry Forest.

Selected Presentations / Publications

Vega-Fontáñez, H. (under review) Los aprendizajes sociales y ambientales en las prácticas de los huertos comunitarios de San Juan, Puerto Rico. *Sociedad y Ambiente*

Vega-Fontáñez, H. (2019) Civic Ecology in the Urban Environment of San Juan, Puerto Rico: Exploratory Study of Community Gardens and Its Socio-Environmental Impact. 14th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE) & 2019 Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program (HSI) Meeting, USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Vega-Fontáñez, H. & Rodríguez N. & Cátala A. & Méndez R. (2016) Bosque Urbano Comunitario de Capetillo: Un Estudio Exploratorio Sobre Comunidades Urbanas y sus Espacios Verdes. *Acta Científica* 30,281-295.

Vega-Fontáñez, H. & Guevarez A. & Cátala A. & Méndez R. & Rodríguez N. (2015) Community and Urban Green Spaces: A Case Study on How People from Capetillo in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico Approach an Urban Forest. 55th Annual Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Conference. Justice and The City: (re)Examining the Past to Create the Future. Houston, Texas.

Vega-Fontáñez, H. (2015). Conference paper: Política Pública sobre Ambiente Urbano en el Municipio de San Juan, Puerto Rico: Un Análisis desde la Perspectiva de los Espacios Verdes en la Ciudad. Conferencia: X Convención Internacional sobre Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo - *II Congreso de Política, Derecho y Justicia Ambiental*, at Havana, Cuba.

Ramsy M., Nytych C., Meléndez Ackerman E., Cartagena M., Fidalgo L., Trujillo A., **Vega-Fontáñez, H.**, Santiago L., Díaz E., Correa N., Olivero S., Fontáñez J., Erazo A., Torres K., Vila C., Ramos O. and Lugo A. (2014). An assessment of residents' satisfaction and short-term visions for urban yards in San Juan, Puerto Rico. 2014 ialeUK Annual Conference & 99th ESA Annual Meeting 2014.

Vega-Fontáñez, H. (2012). Bridging El Yunque National Forest and Espiritu Santo Nature Reserve: a proposal for developing a floodplain Green Corridor in Northeast Puerto Rico. First Undergraduate and Graduate Students Research Congress at UPR-Río Piedras.

Vega-Fontáñez, H. (2011). Community Garden, Nursery, and Urban Forest of Capetillo: How community participation changed community environment. XII N-AERUS CONFERENCE (Network-Association of European Researchers on Urbanization in the South). "The city at human scale". Hosted by the Faculty of Architecture, Polytechnic University of Madrid.

Vega-Fontáñez, H. (2010). "Capetillo Al Rescate de Isla del Diablo: De Vertedero a Bosque Urbano". Community Garden, Nursery, and Urban Forest of Capetillo project, CAUCE. Presentation of initiatives on the rescue and restoration of habitat for the urban community forest. 13 th Caribbean Urban and Community Forestry Conference, USDA-Forest Service.

Rivera, L. & **Vega-Fontáñez, H.** & Vera, R. & Vera, Z. (2010). Area Plan Future Cerra stop of Light Rail San Juan, Puerto Rico. Transportation Week Symposium. Institute of Transportation Engineers, Department of Civil Engineering and Surveying. University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez.

Peschiera, M. & Bulnes, A. & **Vega-Fontáñez, H.** (2007). Difference Between Population of Melocactus intortus in Two Different areas of Guánica dry forest. 2nd UPR-Humacao McNair Research Symposium.

Vega-Fontáñez, H. & Peschiera, M. & Alejandro, T. (2007). Comparison of stomatal density within species from depression forest (bajura) and plateau forest in Mona Island Reserve. 27th Puerto Rico Interdisciplinary Scientific Meeting (PRISM 2007) and 42nd ACS Junior Technical Meeting.

Selected Internships

Summer 2015 - Mini Internado en Estrategias en Redacción de Escritos Académicos y Ensayos para Revistas Profesionales (55 horas). Centro para la Excelencia Académica, UPR-RP.

Summer 2014 - HACU – National Internship Program. Forestry Technician – Research at United States Department of Agriculture – Forest Service.

Fall 2012 - Puerto Rico Sustainable Material Management Internship Program. Environmental Finance Center at Syracuse University.

Summer 2012 - Mentas Puertorriqueñas en Acción. Programa de Apoderamiento y Retención de Agentes de Cambio (PARACa). Research and Final Work: Community Tourism in Puerto Rico: Proposal for effective implementation in Puerto Rican communities. (<http://www.mentespuertorriquenas.org/paraca>)

Fall 2010 - Democratic Governance and Community Development.

Summer 2004 - Transitions to research careers Program (TRC). TRC is a program sponsored by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) that promotes research careers and graduate studies. It also provides first research experience, a Bug diversity research collaboration at Mona Island. Dra. Elvia MeléndezAckerman Lab. UPR-RP. University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus.

Relevant Trainings

Summer 2019 - **Pedagogía de la tierra: Agricultura en armonía con el ambiente.** AFC+A and UPR-RP. Instructor: Dalma Cartagena Colón.

Spring 2017 - **Theories and Methods for Sustainable Neighborhood Revitalization and Slum Upgrading.** Instructor: Dr. Isabelle Anguelovski, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

Sprint 2016 - **Theories and Methods for Sustainable Neighborhood Revitalization and Slum Upgrading.** Instructor: Dr. Isabelle Anguelovski, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

Sprint 2015 - **International Course of Participatory Planning for Equal Structural Change.** ILPES, ECLAC United Nations, Chile.

Summer 2014 - **Computational Summer Institute.** Studies in collaborative data management, application, and visualization in research applying human-environment interactions. National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC). Annapolis, MD.

Fall 2012 - **Collaborative Design and Habitat Studio: bridges between academy and community.** Collaborative workshop between students, professionals, and Buena Vista Santurce community inhabitants to develop a design proposal of urban renewal in common and private spaces. The aim is that students and inhabitants collaborate to create quality living spaces.

2011 - **Agricultural and Biodiversity residential course** at Casa Pueblo, Puerto Rico. Instituto Comunitario de Biodiversidad y Cultura & University of Michigan & University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez.

Summer 2011 - **Training program for graduate students: Research module.** The Dean for Graduate Studies and the Research University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus.

2010 - **Summer Environmental Leader Training (Sprog)**, Sierra Club. Topics Discussed: Strategic Campaign Planning, Principles of Organizational Development, working with the Media, Effective Facilitation for Meetings and Groups, Coalition Building and Influencing Policy & Meeting with Decision-makers.

2010 - **La Parguera Workshop. Wetland Education Through (Maps and Aerial Photography) WETMAAP.** La Parguera Site Development. Sponsored by NASA, CNL World, USGS, UPR-Mayaguez, UPR- Río Piedras.

2010 - Project **Design and Evaluation Workshop.** NOAA Coastal Service Center. (16 contact hrs.).

2009 - **Increasing capacity for Caribbean Wetlands Conservation:** Training Workshop for Monitoring, Education, and Conservation. Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico.

Selected Voluntary / Community Works

- Consultant of Environmental Society of Capetillo (2015 to 2017). The initiative is a community-based association that aims to improve their community's socio-environmental conditions. Assisted to develops different educational activities and helped in diverse administrative and proposal duties.
- Research Development Consultant at The Center for Science and Math Education Research (CSMER) at UPR-RP. Maximizing Yield Through Integration (I3) Project. Provide research assistantship to teachers in the development of their school research project
- Social Change Project Coordinator (2013). Coordinated the process of planning and implementing an interdisciplinary proposal to catalyze a social and mentor 2 participants through 8-week multidisciplinary research. The theme of the project was: Food Security for Puerto Rico. PARACa – Mentas Puertorriqueñas en Acción.
- Sierra Club - Outing Leader. Provides tours in some natural areas in Puerto Rico to provide recreational activities to help meet the organization's goal. Volunteer in various organizational activities and Puerto Rico Northeast Corridor Ecology campaign.
- Hands Across the Sands (2010). Puerto Rico activity organizer. The activity goal was people's awareness about environmental problems, specifically offshore oil drilling.
- Boletín EGP (2011). Editor and founding member of the publication created by planning students. The magazine's goal was to divulge the planning profession and provide a place where students could publish their research.
- First Undergraduate and Graduate Students Research Congress (2012) at UPR-Río Piedras. Member of Steering Committee of congress; sponsored by the office Dean for Graduate Studies and Research at UPR-Río Piedras.

- Student Council of the Graduate School of Planning. Activities coordinator 2009 to 2011 (two terms) and representative of external organizations, 2011 to 2012. Provides social and academic activities that integrate students. Main organizer of the first research symposium: poster presentation. The theme of the symposium was “Repensando el espacio compartido, buscando alternativas para lograr el Puerto Rico habitable”.
- Laboratory assistant at The International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF), USDA Forest Service (Spring 2007). Research studies of *Spathodea campanulata*. (Flooding and profuse flowering result in high litterfall in novel *Spathodea campanulata* forests in northern Puerto Rico. Pi. Abelleira Martinez, Oscar J.)

Scholarships / Awards

- Dissertation Fellowship 2020-2021. Office of the Dean for Graduate Studies and Research University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras.
- HSF Scholar (2016). Hispanic Scholarship Fund.
- IGERT Fellowship - Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship, 2013-2015. National Science Foundation (NSF).
- Outstanding Student, 2012. Recognition of faculty member of Graduate School of Planning University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras
- Global Diversity Scholarship 2010. Adelante U.S. Educational Leadership Fund
- The University of Puerto Rico at Carolina Honor Award, 2002. Recognition for academic excellence in the first year of college.